

Primary Source Investigation

Brief background: Walt Whitman



The Butterfly See Whitman and the Butterfly, below. For additional information, see the online exhibition, “Good Gray Poet: Revising Himself”, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/whitman-goodgraypoet.html>

Cite as:

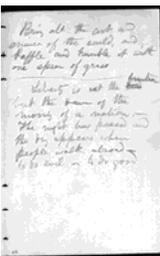
“Cardboard Butterfly.” *Manuscript Division*. Library of Congress.
<<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wwhtml/inbutt.jpg>>.



Whitman and the Butterfly This photograph, taken in 1877, was one of Whitman's favorites. He used the butterfly-on-hand as a recurring motif in his books and intended for this photo to be reproduced as the frontispiece in this sample proof of *Leaves* from 1891. To foster the image of himself as one with nature, he claimed that insect was real and one of his "good friends."

Cite as:

Taylor, W. Curtis. “Whitman with Butterfly, 1877,” *Albumen photograph frontispiece in sample proof of Leaves of Grass, 1891*. *Rare Books and Special Collections Division*. Library of Congress.
<<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/ww0048p1s.jpg>>.



Notebook #80, page 25 Whitman jotted down thoughts in prose and expressions in poetry. The earliest examples include journalistic entries with ideas for articles he might write. His first trial lines for what would soon become part of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* appear in an early notebook ([LC #80](#)). For additional information, see “About

the Walt Whitman Notebooks”

<<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wwhtml/wwntbks.html>>.

Cite as:

Whitman, Walt. “Notebook # 80, page 25.” *Poet at Work: Recovered Notebooks from the Thomas Biggs Harned Walt Whitman Collection. American Memory.* Library of Congress. <<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=whitman&fileName=wwhit080.data&recNum=26>>.



Letter and corrected reprint of Walt Whitman's "O Captain, My Captain" Inspired by the death of President Abraham Lincoln, Whitman wrote "O Captain! My Captain!" a rare example of his rhymed, rhythmically regular verse, in 1865. For additional information, see “Words and Deeds in American History” <[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(mcc/055\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/055)))>.

Cite as:

Whitman, Walt. “Letter and Corrected reprint of Walt Whitman’s ‘O Captain! My Captain!’”. February 1888. *Walt Whitman Collection. American Memory.* Library of Congress. <<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mcc&fileName=055/page.db&recNum=0>>.



Walt Whitman to Louisa Van Velsor Whitman On December 29, 1862, a relieved Whitman wrote to his mother that he had "found George alive and well" in a camp at Falmouth, across the river from Fredricksburg, Virginia. Whitman and his "dear, dear, mother" were extremely close. He wrote to her and other family members throughout the war. For additional information, see the online exhibition “Wound Dresser: Revising Himself” <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/whitman-wounddresser.html>>.

Cite as:

Whitman, Walt. “Walt Whitman to Louisa Velsor Whitman.” 1865. *Revising Himself: Walt Whitman and Leaves of Grass. American Treasures.* Library of Congress. <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/whitman-wounddresser.html>>.